

## Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 DHA-05 IO-13 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05  
H-01 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01  
SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 OMB-01 TRSE-00 /078 W  
-----085330 021226Z /12/41

P 291407Z OCT 77

FM AMEMBASSY BERLIN  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 5984  
INFO AMEMBASSY BONN  
USMISSION USBERLIN

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BERLIN 08114

C O R R E C T E D C O P Y (REF: TO READ STATE 247505 VICE BERLIN)

E.O.11652: GDS  
TAGS: CPRS, GE, US  
SUBJECT: GDR MFA OFFICIAL COMMENTS ON JEWISH MATERIAL  
CLAIMS

REF: STATE 247505

1. DURING AN AFTER-DINNER DISCUSSION OCTOBER 26  
AT THE RESIDENCE, GDR MFA USA DIVISION DIRECTOR GEYER  
SPOKE AT SOME LENGTH ON THE MATTER OF THE GDR ATTITUDE  
TOWARD CLAIMS SETTLEMENTS. WHILE NOT ALL HIS COMMENTS  
CAN OR SHOULD BE TAKEN AT FACE VALUE, THEY PRESUMABLY  
REFLECT SOME OF THE PSYCHOLOGICAL THINKING THAT  
GOES INTO OFFICIAL GDR POSITIONS ON THE MATTER OF  
THE JEWISH CLAIMS QUESTION. DURING THE DISCUSSION  
GEYER STATED AT SEVERAL TIMES THAT HE WAS EXPRESSING  
HIS OWN INFORMAL VIEWS, AND THE AMBASSADOR SAID  
THAT HE LOOK ON THE DISCUSSION AS A PRIVATE, INFORMAL  
ONE ON BOTH SIDES, THE PURPOSE OF WHICH WAS TO OBTAIN  
A BETTER UNDERSTANDING OF EACH OTHER'S THINKING ON  
A MATTER OF IMPORTANCE IN OUR BILATERAL RELATIONS.  
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2. GEYER, WITH SOME EMOTION, MADE THE POINT THAT THE  
GDR DOES NOT BELIEVE IT IS A SUCCESSOR STATE TO THE  
THIRD REICH IN THE MATTER OF CLAIMS. HE SAID THAT  
MANY GDR CITIZENS, NOT ONLY GOVERNMENT BUREAUCRATS  
SUCH AS HIMSELF, AND ALSO MEMBERS OF THE LEADERSHIP,  
HAD SUFFERED PERSONALLY AT THE HANDS OF THE NAZIS.

THEREFORE, THEY SYMPATHIZED WITH SURVIVING VICTIMS OF NAZISM IN OTHER COUNTRIES. THEY FEEL THEY ARE "ON THE SAME SIDE." ALTHOUGH IT IS SOMEWHAT IRONIC FOR THE GDR, IT IS WILLING TO DEAL WITH PEOPLE WHO ARE REPRESENTATIVES OF ORGANIZATIONS OF INDIVIDUALS WHO HAVE PERSONALLY SUFFERED AT THE HANDS OF THE NAZIS EVEN THOUGH THE REPRESENTATIVES THEMSELVES DID NOT SUFFER. THEREFORE, ALTHOUGH THE GDR FEELS IT HAS NO MORAL OR LEGAL OBLIGATION TO PAY COMPENSATION FOR THE CRIMES COMMITTED BY THE NAZIS, THE GDR HAS A SYMPATHETIC HUMANITARIAN ATTITUDE TOWARD THOSE VICTIMS OF NAZISM WHO FEEL SOME COMPENSATION SHOULD BE PAID TO THEM.

3. GEYER WENT ON TO SAY THAT THE GDR HAD NEVER SAID IT WOULD NOT TALK TO REPRESENTATIVES OF THE CONFERENCE ON JEWISH MATERIAL CLAIMS. FOR THE PHILOSOPHICAL REASON NOTED ABOVE, THE GDR HAD BEEN PREPARED TO HOLD SUCH TALKS. IN FACT, THE GDR, AS THE AMBASSADOR KNEW, HAD PAID \$1 MILLION IN CASH AS A HUMANITARIAN GESTURE TO THE CONFERENCE. THAT PAYMENT HAD BEEN REJECTED BY THE CONFERENCE ON JEWISH MATERIAL CLAIMS. GEYER INDICATED THAT THE PUBLIC REJECTION OF THIS HAD HAD A VERY NEGATIVE REACTION AMONG EAST GERMAN LEADERS. GEYER SAID HE WAS PREPARED TO ACCEPT THE REASONING GIVEN HIM BY FERENCZ FOR THE REJECTION; BUT NEVERTHELESS  
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THE RETURN OF THE MONEY HAD CAUSED A BAD REACTION. GEYER ASSERTED, WITHOUT ELABORATING, THAT IN MAKING THE PAYMENT OF \$1 MILLION, THE GDR HAD NOT SAID THIS WOULD BE THE LAST SUCH PAYMENT; UNFORTUNATELY, NO ONE HAD TRIED BEFORE REJECTING THE MONEY TO FIND OUT WHAT GDR THINKING WAS ON THE SUBJECT.

4. IN RESPONSE TO THE AMBASSADOR'S QUESTION, GEYER SAID THAT HE WAS AWARE OF THE PROPOSAL FERENCZ HAD MADE OCTOBER 24 TO FUNKE OF THE ANTI-FASCIST COMMITTEE (REFTEL). GEYER SAID HE HAD SOME DOUBTS ABOUT IT AND WHETHER IT HAD MUCH MERIT, AND ADDED THAT HE HAD NOT MADE UP HIS MIND ABOUT THE PROPOSAL. HE CONCEDED THAT THE IDEA SHOULD NOT BE DISMISSED OUT OF HAND, THAT IT WOULD BE WORTH REFLECTING ON, AND THAT IT MIGHT BE WORTH TALKING FURTHER WITH APPROPRIATE REPRESENTATIVES OF THE CONFERENCE ON JEWIMATERIAL CLAIMS ABOUT IT. HE WOULD NOT, HOWEVER, COMMIT HIMSELF TO SAYING THAT THE GDR WAS PREPARED TO CONTINUE TO TALK ON THE SUBJECT. AT THE SAME TIME, HE DID EXPRESS SOME DISTASTE FOR TALKING WITH REPRESENTATIVES WHO AT THE SAME TIME ARE ENGAGED IN OTHER MATTERS IN WHICH

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 5985  
INFO AMEMBASSY BONN  
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 02 OF 02 BERLIN 08114

THEY ARE ADVOCATES OF AN ANTI-GDR POSITION. (GEYER DID NOT MENTION FERENCZ BY NAME, BUT IT SEEMS QUITE OBVIOUS THAT HE WAS REFERRING TO FERENCZ'S POSITION, ON THE ONE HAND, OF REPRESENTING THE CONFERENCE ON JEWISH MATERIAL CLAIMS AND, ON THE OTHER HAND, OF FERENCZ'S ROLE AS A LAWYER IN THE CASE OF THE DUERER PAINTINGS. IN THIS CONTEXT, GEYER ALLUDED TO A POSSIBLE CONFLICT OF INTEREST ON THE PART OF FERENCZ.)

5. DURING THE DISCUSSION, GEYER ALSO QUESTIONED WHETHER PEOPLE SUCH AS SENATOR JAVITS AND CONGRESSMAN BINGHAM, WHO ARE QUITE PROMINENT AND ACTIVE NOW, WOULD BE AROUND IN 4 OR 5 YEARS. HE WONDERED FURTHER, IF A MID-EAST PEACE SETTLEMENT COULD BE WORKED OUT, WHETHER JEWISH PRESSURE GROUPS IN THE US WOULD HAVE AS MUCH INFLUENCE AS THEY HAD NOW. WITHOUT SAYING SO SPECIFICALLY, GEYER SEEMED TO BE REFLECTING A VIEW THAT PERHAPS WITH THE PASSING OF TIME THE GDR MIGHT FEEL THAT A US ADMINISTRATION WOULD BE UNDER LESS PRESSURE FROM JEWISH ORGANIZATIONS TO BE ACTIVE SUPPORTERS OF A SETTLEMENT ON JEWISH CLAIMS WITH THE GDR. THE AMBASSADOR ASSURED GEYER THAT PEOPLE SUCH AS JAVITS AND BINGHAM CERTAINLY WOULD CONTINUE TO PLAY  
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A PROMINENT ROLE IN US PUBLIC LIFE AND THAT IT WOULD BE A MISTAKE NOT TO CONTINUE TO UNDERSTAND THEIR IMPORTANCE AND INFLUENCE. GEYER SEEMED TO ACCEPT THE POINT.

6. ON CLAIMS IN GENERAL, GEYER ACKNOWLEDGED THAT THE US HAD SOME TIME AGO SUGGESTED THE IDEA OF EXPERTS MEETING TOGETHER FOR DISCUSSIONS ON CLAIMS REGULATIONS AND PROCEDURES IN BOTH COUNTRIES FOR THE PURPOSE OF CREATING A BETTER UNDERSTANDING OF THOSE PROCEDURES. GEYER EXPRESSED THE VIEW THAT PERHAPS WE HAD MADE THE SUGGESTION BECAUSE WE WANTED TO TAKE "ADVANTAGE" OF THE GDR IN NEGOTIATING A CLAIMS SETTLEMENT. WE ASSURED GEYER THAT OUR PURPOSE IN MAKING THE SUGGESTION WAS TO CREATE BETTER UNDERSTANDING SO THAT THE FORMAL NEGOTIATIONS, ONCE THEY BEGIN, WOULD TAKE PLACE SMOOTHLY AND PRODUCTIVELY. NO ONE EXPECTED THAT THERE WOULD NOT BE DIFFERENCES OF VIEWS, BUT THAT DID NOT MEAN THAT WE SHOULD NOT TRY TO GET THE NEGOTIATIONS UNDER WAY IN AS CONSTRUCTIVE A MANNER AS POSSIBLE IN TERMS OF IMPROVING RELATIONS BETWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES.

7. COMMENT: WE THINK IT IS IMPORTANT THAT GEYER DID NOT REJECT THE IDEA OF MAINTAINING CONTACT WITH THE CONFERENCE AND THAT HE HAS NOT MADE UP HIS MIND ABOUT THE SUBSTANCE OF FERENCZ' PROPOSAL. THIS WOULD SUGGEST THAT THERE IS MERIT IN URGING THE CONFERENCE TO GIVE THE GDR TIME TO REFLECT ON FERENCZ'S PROPOSAL FOR FURTHER TALKS BEFORE COMING TO ANY QUICK DECISION ON A NEXT STEP. GEYER'S ALLUSION TO CONFLICT OF INTEREST AND IMPLIED DISTASTE FOR FERENCZ RAISE THE QUESTION OF WHETHER THE MATTER OF MAKING PROGRESS ON A JEWISH CLAIMS SETTLEMENT MIGHT NOT BE FURTHERED BY A

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CHANGE IN THE DISCUSSION PARTNERS. FERENCZ HIMSELF TOLD US HE FELT AT THE END OF THE ROAD WITH THE EAST GERMANS, AND SUGGESTED TO FUNKE THAT PERHAPS FORMER AMBASSADOR KLUTZNICK COULD BE A FUTURE PARTICIPANT IN TALKS WITH THE GDR ON THIS ISSUE. WITHOUT APPEARING TO BECOME INVOLVED IN THE DECISION-MAKING PROCESS OF JEWISH ORGANIZATIONS, THE DEPARTMENT MAY WISH TACITLY TO ENCOURAGE SUCH A DEVELOPMENT IF FERENCZ OR OTHERS SHOULD RAISE IT. IN ANY EVENT, WE THINK THE DEPARTMENT SHOULD INDICATE TO FERENCZ AND HIS COLLEAGUES THAT THE AMBASSADOR HAS, AS HE SAID HE WOULD, MADE CLEAR OUR POSITION OF FACILITATING TALKS BETWEEN THE COMMITTEE AND THE CONFERENCE, AND THAT HE REMAINS LESS PESSIMISTIC THAN FERENCZ ABOUT THE OPPORTUNITY FOR THE CONFERENCE

TO PURSUE THE MATTER FURTHER. BOLEN

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## Message Attributes

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